

A. R. Parsons' appeal to the people of America. Chicago, Ill. Sept. 21, 1887.

A. R. PARSONS' APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE OF AMERICA.

To the American People — *Fellow Citizens*: As all the world knows I have been convicted and sentenced to die for the crime of murder—the most heinous offense that can be committed. Under the forms of law two courts—viz., the criminal and supreme courts of the state of Illinois—have sentenced me to death as an accessory before the fact to the murder of Officer Degan on May 4, 1886. Nevertheless I am innocent of the crime charged, and to a candid and unprejudiced world I submit the proof.

In the decision affirming the sentence of death upon me, the supreme court of the state of Illinois says: "It is undisputed that the bomb was thrown that caused the death of Degan. It is conceded that no one of the defendants threw the bomb with his own hands. Plaintiffs in error are charged with being accessories before the fact."

If I did not throw the bomb myself it becomes necessary to prove that I aided, encouraged, and advised the person who did throw it. Is that fact proven? The supreme court says it is. The record says it is not. I appeal to the American people to judge between them.

The supreme court quotes articles from *The Alarm*, the paper edited by me, and from my speeches running back three years before the Haymarket tragedy of May 4, 1886. Upon said articles and speeches the court affirms my sentence of death as an accessory. The court says: "The articles in *The Alarm* were most of them written by the defendant Parsons, and some of them by the defendant Spies," and then proceeds to quote these articles. I refer to the record to prove that of all the articles quoted only one was shown to have been written by me. I wrote, of course, a great many articles for *The Alarm*, but the record will show that only one of the many quoted by the supreme court to prove my guilt as an accessory was written by me, and this article appeared in *The Alarm* Dec. 6, 1884, one year and a half before the Haymarket meeting.

As to Mr. Spies, the record will show that during the three years I was editor of *The Alarm* he did not write for the paper half a dozen articles. For proof as to this I appeal to the record.

The Alarm was a labor paper, and, as is well known, a labor paper is conducted as a medium through which working people can make known their grievances. *The Alarm* was no exception to this rule. I not only did not write "most of the articles," but wrote comparatively few of them. This the record will also show.

In referring to my Haymarket speech the court says: "To the men then listening to him he had addressed the incendiary appeals that had been appearing in *The Alarm* for two years." The court then quotes the "incendiary" article which I did write, and which is as follows: "One dynamite bomb properly placed will destroy a regiment of soldiers; a weapon easily made and carried with perfect safety in the pockets of one's clothing."

The record will show by referring to *The Alarm* that this is a garbled extract taken from a statement made by General Philip Sheridan in his annual report to congress. It was simply a reiteration of Gen. Sheridan's statement that dynamite was easily made, perfectly safe to handle, and a very destructive WEAPON OF WARFARE.

The article in full as it appeared in *The Alarm* is as follows:

"Dynamite. The protection of the poor against the armies of the rich. In submitting his annual report Nov. 10, 1884, Gen. Philip Sheridan, commander of the United States army, says: "This nation is growing so rapidly that there are signs of other troubles which I hope will not occur, and which will probably not come upon us if both capital and labor will only be conservative. Still it should be remembered destructive explosives are easily made, and that banks, United States sub-treasuries, public buildings, and large mercantile houses can be readily demolished, and the commerce of entire cities destroyed by an infuriated people with means carried with perfect safety 10 themselves in the pockets of their clothing."

The editorial comment upon the above, as it appeared in *The Alarm* , is as follows: "A hint to the wise is sufficient. Of course Gen. Sheridan is too modest to tell us that he himself and army will be powerless in the coming revolution between the propertied and propertyless classics. Only in foreign wars can the usual weapons of warfare be used to any advantage. One dynamite bomb properly placed will destroy a regiment of soldiers; a weapon easily made and carried with perfect safety in the pockets of one's clothing. The 1st regiment may as well disband, for if it should ever level its guns upon the workingmen of Chicago it can be totally annihilated."

Again the court says: "He [Parsons] had said to them [referring to the people assembled at the Haymarket] Saturday, April 24, 1886, just ten days before May 4, in the last issue of *The Alarm* that had appeared: "Workingmen, to arms! War to the palace, peace to the cottage, and death to luxurious idleness! The wage system is the only cause of the world's misery. It is supported by the rich classes, and to destroy it they must be either made to work or die. One pound of dynamite is better than a bushel of ballots! Make your demand for eight hours with weapons in your hands to meet the capitalist bloodhounds—police and militia—in a proper manner."

The record will show that this article was not written by me, but was published as a news item. By referring to the columns of *The Alarm*, the following editorial comment appears attached to the above article—viz.: “The above handbill was sent to us from Indianapolis, Ind., as having been posted all over that city last week. Our correspondent says that the police tore them down wherever they found them.”

The court, continuing, says: “At the close of another article in the same issue he said: ‘The social war has come, and whoever is not with us is against us.’” Asst. State's Atty. Walker read this article to the jury, and at its conclusion stated that it bore my initials and was my article. It is a matter within the knowledge of everyone then present, that I interrupted him and called his attention to the fact that the article did not bear my initials and that I was not its author. Mr. Walker corrected his mistake to the jury.

Now these are the three articles quoted by the supreme court as proof of my guilt as an accessory in a conspiracy to murder Officer Degan. The record will PROVE WHAT I SAY.

Now as to my speeches. All of them with one exception purporting to be my utterances at the Haymarket are given from the excited imagination and perverted memories of newspaper reporters. Mr. English, who alone took shorthand notes and swore to their correctness, reports me as saying: “It is time to raise a note of warning. There is nothing in the eight-hour movement to excite the capitalist. Don't you know that the military are under arms and a Gatling gun is ready to mow you down? Was this Germany, or Russia, or Spain? [A voice; ‘It looks like it.’] Whenever you make a demand for eight hours' pay, or increase of pay, the militia and deputy sheriffs and the Pinkerton men are called out, and you are shot and clubbed and murdered in the streets. I am not here for the purpose of inciting anybody, but to speak out—to tell the facts as they exist, even though it shall cost me my life before morning!”

Mr. English, continuing, said: “There is another part of it [the speech] right here. ‘It behooves you, as you love your wife and children, if you don't want to see them perish with hunger, killed, or cut down like dogs on the street—Americans, in the interest of your liberty and your independence, to arm, arm yourselves!’”

This, be it remembered, is a garbled extract, and it is a matter of record that Reporter English testified that he was instructed by the proprietor of his paper to report only the inflammatory portions of the speeches made at that meeting. Mayor Harrison, who was present and heard this speech, testified before the jury that it was simply “a violent political harangue,” and did not call for his interference as a peace officer.

The speech delivered by me at the Haymarket, and which I repeated before the jury, is a matter of record and undisputed; and I challenge anyone to show therein that I incited anyone to acts of violence. The extract reported by Mr. English, when taken in connection with what preceded and what followed, can not be construed by the wildest imagination as incitement to violence.

Extracts from three other speeches alleged to have been delivered by me more than one year prior to May 4, 1886, are given. Two of these speeches were reported from the memory of the Pinkerton detective, Johnson. These are the speeches quoted by the court as proof of my guilt as accessory to the murder of Degan. Where, then, is the connection between these speeches and the murder of Degan? I am bold to declare that such connection is imperceptible to the eye of a fair and unprejudiced mind. But the honorable body, the supreme court of Illinois, has condemned me to death for speeches I never made and for articles I never wrote. In the affirmation of the death sentence the court has "assumed," "supposed," "guessed," "surmised" and "presumed" that I said and did "so and so." This the record fully proves.

The court says: "Spies, Schwab, Parsons, and Engel were responsible for the articles written and published by them as above shown. Spies, Schwab, Fielden, Parsons, and Engel were responsible for the speeches made by them respectively, and there is evidence in the record tending to show that the DEATH OF DEGAN occurred during the prosecution of a conspiracy planned by the members of the International groups who read these articles and heard those speeches."

Now I defy anyone to show from the record the proof that I wrote more than one of the many articles alleged to have been written by me. Yet the supreme court says that I wrote and am responsible for all of them. Again, concerning the alleged speeches, they were reported by the Pinkerton detective, Johnson, who was, as the record shows, employed by Lyman J. Gage, vice president of the First National bank, as the agent of the Citizens' Association, an organization composed of the millionaire employers of Chicago. I submit to a candid world if this hired spy would not make false reports to earn his blood-money. Thus it is that for speeches I did not make and articles I did not write I am sentenced to die because the court "assumes" that these articles influenced some unknown and still unidentified person to throw the bomb that killed Degan. Is this law? Is this justice?

The supreme court in affirming the sentence of death upon me, proceeds to give further reasons, as follows:

"Two circumstances are to be noted: First, it can hardly be said that Parsons was absent from the Haymarket meeting when he went into Zepf's hall. It has already been stated that the latter place

was only a few steps north of the speakers' wagon and in sight from it. We do not think that the defendant Parsons could escape his share of the responsibility for the explosion at the Haymarket because he stepped into a neighboring saloon and looked at the explosion through a window. While he was speaking men stood around him with arms in their hands. Many of these were members of the armed sections of the International groups. Among them were men who belonged to the International rifles, an armed organization in which he himself was an officer, and with which he had been drilling in preparation for the events then transpiring."

The records of the trial will show that not one of the foregoing allegations is true. The facts are these: Zepf's hall is on the northeast corner of Lake and Desplaines streets, just one block north of the speakers' wagon. The court says: "It was only a few steps north of the speakers' wagon." The court says further that, "it can hardly be said that Parsons was absent from the Haymarket meeting, when he was at Zepf's hall." If this is correct logic, then I was at two different places a block apart at the same instant. Truly, the day of miracles has not yet passed. Again, the record will show that I did not "step into a neighboring saloon and look at the explosion through a window." It will show that I went to Zepf's hall, one block distant, and across Lake street, accompanied by my wife and another lady and my two children (a girl of 5 and a boy of 7 years of age,) they having sat upon a wagon about ten feet from the speakers wagon throughout my speech; that it looked like rain; that we HAD STARTED HOME, and went into Zepf's hall to wait for the meeting to adjourn, and walk home in company with a lot of friends who lived in that direction. Zepf's building is on the corner, and opens on the street with a triangular door six feet wide. Myself and ladies and children were just inside the door. Here, while waiting for our friends and looking toward the meeting, I had a fair view of the explosion. All this the record will show.

It would seem that, according to circumstances, a block is at one time "a few steps," or a "few steps" is "more than a block," as the case may suit. The logical as well as the imaginative faculties of the supreme court are further illustrated in a most striking manner by the credence of the court to the "yarn" of a "reporter," who testified that Spies had described to him the "czar" bomb and the men who were to use them as follows:

"He spoke of a body of tall, strong men in their organization who could throw bombs weighing five pounds 150 paces. He stated that the bombs in question were to be used in case of conflict with the police or militia."

The court gives this sort of testimony as proof of the existence of a conspiracy to murder Degan. Wonderful credulity! To throw a five-pound bomb 150 paces or yards is to throw it 450 feet or one-quarter of a mile. Gulliver, in his travels among the Brobdingnagian race, tells of the giants he met, and we have also heard of the giants of Patagonia, but we did not know until now that they were

Lilliputians as compared with the "Anarchist Swedes" of Chicago. The court proceeds to say: "While he (Parsons) was speaking men stood around with arms in their hands." The record, as quoted by the court, shows that only one man flourished a pistol, not a number of men. Again the court says: "Most of the men were members of the armed sections of the international groups," thus making it appear that many of these men (when there was only one who was even alleged to have exhibited a pistol) were armed.

The court says: "Among them were men who belonged to the International rifles, an armed organization, in which he himself was an officer and in which he had been drilling in preparation for the events then transpiring."

Now, I challenge the supreme court or any other honorable gentlemen to prove from the record that there ever existed such an organization as that armed section of the American group known as the "International rifles." It can not be done. The record shows that some members of the American group did organize THE "INTERNATIONAL RIFLES," which never met but four or five times, was never armed with rifles or any other weapons, and disbanded nearly one year before May 4, 1886.

The Pinkerton man, Johnson, says that dynamite bombs were exhibited in the presence of the International rifles. It will take corroborative testimony before the American people will credit the statements of such a man engaged for such a purpose, and it is well known that supreme courts have decided that the testimony of detectives should be taken with great caution.

I appeal to the American people in their love of justice and fair play. I submit that the record does not show my guilt of the crime of murder, but, on the contrary, it proves my innocence.

Against me in this trial all the rules of law and evidence have been reversed in that I have been held as guilty until I proved my innocence.

I have been tried ostensibly for murder, but in reality for Anarchism. I have been proven guilty of being an anarchist, and condemned to die for that reason. The state's attorney said in his statement before court and jury in the beginning of the trial: "These defendants were picked out and indicated by the grand jury, they are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. They are picked out because they are leaders. Convict them, and our society is safe." And in their last appeal to the jury the prosecution said: "Anarchy is on trial. Hang these eight men and save our institutions. These are the leaders. Make examples of them." This is a matter of record.

So far as I have had time to examine the record I find the same fabrications and perversion of testimony against all my comrades as exists against myself. I therefore again appeal to the American people to avert the crime of judicial murder, and this appeal I have faith will not be in vain.

My ancestors partook of all the hardships incident to the establishment of this republic. They fought, bled, and some of them died, that the Declaration of Independence might live and the American flag might wave in triumph over those who claim the "divine right of kings to rule." Shall that flag now, after a century's triumph, trail in the mire of oppression, and protect the perpetration of outrages and oppressions that would put the older despotisms of Europe to shame?

Knowing myself innocent of crime I came forward and gave myself up for trial. I felt that it was my duty to take my chances with the rest of my comrades. I sought a fair and impartial trial before a jury of my peers, and knew that before any fair-minded jury I could with little difficulty be cleared. I preferred to be tried and take the CHANCES OF AN ACQUITTAL with my friends to being hunted as a felon. Have I had a fair trial?

The lovers of justice and fair play are assiduously engaged in an effort to thwart the consummation of judicial murder by a commutation of sentence to prison. I speak for myself alone when I say that for this I thank them and appreciate their efforts, but I am an innocent man. I have violated no law; I have committed no offense against anyone's rights. I am simply the victim of the malice of those whose anger has been aroused by the power, strength and independence of the labor organizations of America. I am a sacrifice to those who say: "These men may be innocent. No matter. They are Anarchists. We must hang them anyway."

My counsel informs me that every effort will be made to take this case before the highest tribunal in the land and that there is a strong hope of a hearing there. But I am also reliably informed that from three to five years will elapse before the supreme court of the United States can hear and adjudge the case. Since surrendering myself to the authorities I have been locked up in close confinement twenty-one hours of every twenty-four for six days, and from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning (thirty-eight hours) each week in a noisome cell, without a ray of sunshine or a breath of pure air. To be compelled to bear this for five, or even three years, would be to suffer a lingering death, and it is only a matter of serious consideration with me, whether I ought to accept the verdict as it stands, rather than die by inches under such conditions. I am prepared to die. I am ready, if need be, to lay down my life for my rights and the rights of my fellowmen. But I object to being killed on false and unproven accusations. Therefore I CAN NOT COUNTENANCE or accept the effort of those who would endeavor to procure a commutation of my sentence to an imprisonment in the penitentiary. Neither do I approve of any further appeals to the courts of law. I believe them to be

all alike—the agency of the privileged class to perpetuate their power, to oppress and plunder the toiling masses. As between capital and its legal rights and labor and its natural rights, the courts of law must side with the capitalist class. To appeal to them is in vain. It is the appeal of the wage slave to his capitalistic master for liberty. The answer is curses, blows, imprisonment, and death.

If I had never been an anarchist before, my experience with courts and the laws of the governing classes would make an anarchist of me now. What is Anarchism? It is a state of society without any central or governing power. Upon this subject the court in its affirmation of the death sentence defines the object of the International Working People's association as follows:

"It is designed to bring about a social revolution. Social revolution meant the destruction of the right of private ownership of property, or the right of the individual to own property. It meant the bringing about of a state of society in which all property should be held in common."

If this definition is right, than it is very similar to that advocated by Jesus Christ for proof of which refer to the fourth and fifth chapters of the acts of the Apostles also Matthew XXI., 10 to 14; and Mark XI., 15 to 19.

No, I am not guilty. I have not been proven guilty. I leave it to you to decide from the record itself as to my guilt or innocence.

I CAN NOT THEREFORE ACCEPT a commutation to imprisonment. I appeal not for mercy, but for justice. As for me, the utterance of Patrick Henry is so apropos that I can not do better than let him speak:

"Is life so dear and peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may pursue, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

A. R. PARSONS.

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 21, 1887. [Prison cell No. 29].

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